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DOING AND BELIEVING.
A MEMOIR

THE
CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE
OF A LADY.



HARTFORD:
CASE, LOCKWOOD & BRAINARD.
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INTRODUCTION.



As this little book tells its own story, no further explanation seems necessary than a few words respecting the motive for its publication.

The pungent convictions and deep mental exercises which were experienced by the writer of these pages, were no transient emotions. Their abiding effects were manifest in years of sincere devotion to her Saviour's cause, in conscientious obedience to His will, and in humble walks of usefulness and kindness to her fellow-creatures.

Reverting to her past experience, she remembered the darkness of the way through which, in unbelief and doubt, she had struggled, and she longed to communicate to other burdened souls the knowledge of the paths by which she had emerged into hope, and a life of obedience to her Lord. She felt that God had signalized the greatness of His mercy in redeeming her from the thralldom of sin, and that the responsibility rested upon her to make known those mercies as a means of leading others to an entire submission to the Saviour's will, which she had found to be the only way of peace.

She was thus led to feel it her duty to put her experience in print, and she had prepared the manuscript for the press. But she had long been subject to ill health, and the disease from which she suffered so rapidly hastened to its final work that the hand of death was upon her, as she said, "before her work was done."

It therefore devolved on one who dearly loved and deeply sympathized with her, to finish what she had hoped herself to complete.

It is a plain, truthful, and serious story, which will attract only those who are interested in eternal things. If any such shall find themselves aided in their searchings after truth, it will be the fulfillment of all she desired.

DOING AND BELIEVING.

WHEN we have said that all true Christian experience illustrates the word of God, we have given the best reason for making public, individual religious history, as being what belongs to the church of Christ, as an instrumentality in advancing His kingdom among men.

That it may become such an instrumentality we infer from the Scripture declaration: "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Prov. 27:19. Has one soul found all its pressing need met by the doctrine of Christ? this furnishes encouragement to others under the burden of like wants to look to the same Almighty helper.

These considerations have impressed upon me the obligation to give an account of what I believe to be the work of God in my soul.

MY EARLY IMPRESSIONS.

From my earliest recollection, I was quite susceptible to impressions from religious truth. I had many thoughts on death and eternity, and in these thoughts death was invested with fearful gloom. That I might be prepared to meet this dreaded foe, I desired to become acquainted with God, to be a Christian,—but until the religious awakening of 1821, my experience was not more marked than that of most thoughtful children in whose character the element of fear is distinctly prominent.

In the very powerful and extensive revival referred to, my sympathies were deeply enlisted; I attended many meetings, conversed much with my companions on the great subject which stirred all hearts, sought every opportunity to listen to the religious conversation of others, and wept abundantly if addressed personally on the subject of salvation, and in my secret soul considered myself a seeker after salvation. And yet, I would never acknowledge myself openly an enquirer—ingeniously avoiding those who I feared would converse with me on my personal duty to God, and thus, shutting up in my own heart

what I did feel, I failed to receive that help which might have led me, at that early period of my life, to Christ and salvation.

Though this seriousness remained for some time upon my mind, it resulted in nothing more definite than an increased tenderness of conscience, and an interest in religious meetings, which from this time I regularly attended, and I was thus prepared to welcome the return of revival influences which were enjoyed in the summer of 1826. The presence of the Holy Spirit in religious assemblies was manifest at that time in the deep seriousness pervading all minds.

It was then that I made my first earnest effort to find the favor of God. I was interested in the meetings, and usually returned from them with a heavy heart, and when by myself my feelings were tender and solemn.

I was conscious of a deep want, of dissatisfaction with mere worldly life; thoughts of God would steal over me, and I would try to realize His presence. But I began wrong in my search after Him. I did not begin by coming to Him through Christ.

Gazing one evening at the starry heavens, I

strove to bring into my soul the sense of God, as Creator. I saw His handiwork,—Him I could not feel. I admired the beauty and glory of creation,—but when I remembered the Scripture truth that enmity to God possesses the sinner's heart by nature, I failed to comprehend its possibility in my case.

One Sunday I took up a book used as a textbook in Miss B——'s school, entitled Catlin's Theology. I read the first chapter, on the being of a God. As I read I tried to feel what I read, but my mind was dark, and no impression was received. In the evening I heard a very solemn sermon, and the desire arose in my mind to attend the enquiry meeting appointed for the next evening.

My fears of what would be thought by others kept me from any avowal of this desire until the determination to go was expressed by others in the family. Three of us attended the meeting, and felt that it was a solemn place.

Rev. J. H. L—— addressed a few words to me on the necessity of a change of heart as a preparation for another world, and enquired, if, with my present feelings, I could be happy in heaven. This put me upon an examination of my state.

I returned home feeling that by going there I had committed myself to this important subject, and must therefore give up every other object of thought and make the attainment of salvation my chief business.

The next day I sat down deliberately by myself to decide whether I should now give an earnest attention to the concerns of my soul, and solemnly made the decision to do so. Immediately eternity appeared to me as it had never appeared before: it seemed very near and real. I now again took up Catlin's Theology, and again read the chapter on the being of a God, and, as I read, the evidences of the existence of a supreme, intelligent Being—particularly this—that the Being who was the author of intelligence in others must himself be an intelligent Being—the truth of this statement came home with power to my heart, and I *felt* that there was a God, that He was a present God—about my path—in the works of nature, a Spirit, pervading and giving life to all things.

With this realization came also the consciousness of my own soul—its individuality,—its deathless nature, and my mind was raised above

all earthly pleasures and pursuits, and nothing seemed of importance in comparison with the interests of the soul.

There was a grandeur inexpressible in these views of the natural perfections of God. But I could not rest here. To know the character of God more perfectly, I must study his law, and thus learn my own character as a sinner—a transgressor of that law, and be led to feel my need of Christ as a Saviour.

The portions of Scripture which I selected for my reading were those which were adapted to produce conviction of sin. I wanted deep conviction; I wanted an experience which I should know was the work of the Spirit of God; I wanted to be assured of being on a right foundation, one that should never fail.

As I thus read and prayed, I gained from day to day some view of my own heart, its blindness, its hardness and insensibility to divine truth, but as by this view I seemed to myself to be losing ground, I began to have a great dread of being left to give up my present interest in the important subject.

Oppressed with this fear, I went to see my

pastor. I had little freedom in expressing my feelings, but he proceeded to direct me to Christ, and urge my speedy acceptance of His mercy. I thought his instructions were not at all adapted to my state, that I had not begun to have conviction enough to think of coming to Christ, so I returned home greatly troubled.

I attended many meetings, and heard stirring appeals, but no effect seemed to be produced upon my obdurate heart. That which I did feel was chiefly pain on account of my want of feeling. The sins on which my thoughts dwelt were chiefly those of neglect of duty to God—avoiding religious conversation when, during the previous revival, my mind had been considerably impressed with my need of salvation, which now appeared to me to be a great sin.

At an enquiry meeting, I expressed to the pastor these convictions, but at the same time urged my inability to yield to the claims of God. To these complaints the pastor only replied once and again, "You must submit," moving at the same time the staff he held in his hand around in a circle on the floor. A significant act, indicating what my after experience taught me, that,

whatever self-contrived methods I might resort to to obtain the favor of God, however wide a circle of duties I might travel around, I must come back to this same spot, as the true starting point.

My impressions continued, but I became more desponding, and the following expression in a letter to an absent *sister* indicates the ground of my discouragement:

“AUG. 30th. * * * I hardly know what to write. I wish you were here, then I could tell you all my feelings, and receive from you counsel and instruction. A revival of religion has commenced in this place: I trust I feel some interest in it, but I fear greatly that I shall again be passed over, and if I am, I feel as though my case would be hopeless. I have had many calls and warnings through the whole course of my life, which I have neglected, and therefore I think it would be just in God to leave me to myself, if I am not already given up to hardness of heart.

“It is about a week since I determined to give up my mind to the contemplation of this great subject. In that time I have considered it of the utmost importance, though I have not had

such views of my depravity and sinfulness as I suppose every one must have before they will give up all for Christ.

“I hope to have your prayers, that, if any right impressions have been made upon my mind, they may be increased, and never leave me until my feet are planted on the Rock of Ages, and if I have not yet felt any real conviction of my situation, O! do pray earnestly that I may not be given up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind. I wish I could feel, and I wish you could for me, the immeasurable importance and danger of my present condition. I feel truly that I am without hope and without God in the world,—miserable, poor, blind, and naked, yet,

‘I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
 Insensible as steel;
 If aught I feel, ’t is only pain
 To find I cannot feel.’

“Perhaps you may think from my writing in this manner, that as I have begun to think, there is great encouragement on my account, but I do not think so. I am in so much fear that what little impression I have felt will wear off, that it sometimes in my own mind amounts to almost a

certainly that I shall be left to grieve the Spirit of God. I have several times conversed with Mr. H——; all he tells me is, that there is danger in my case. He says, ‘You must submit to God or be lost—this is the only alternative.’

“Now, I feel it to be much easier to return back to the world, than to give up my heart to Christ, and, if his grace does not prevent, that will be the dreadful result.

“As a last request, I would beg you and C—— to remember us in your supplications at the throne of grace—do pray earnestly for us. And yet, I know that I can do nothing and you can do nothing towards our salvation, it must be all the work of God.”

On the next day, I had a very clear and distressing view of my exposure to the world of despair, it seemed that hope had well nigh left me. The next afternoon I attended an enquiry meeting at Mr. E——’s, at which Mr. S—— presided. I still expressed discouragement and inability to do anything for myself. Mr. S——, after some remarks, quoted to me this scripture: “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.”

In the night following, I awoke in great distress of mind; it seemed as though the offer of mercy was then made to me, which, if I should now refuse, I should fail of eternal life, and it seemed imperative that my choice was to be made before I should again sleep. I arose to pray, and had a near mental view of Christ as an inviting Saviour, extending His hand to me, and waiting my submission, but my heart drew back, for His countenance towards me was not attractive, I dared not venture. The conflict in my mind was great; argument upon argument came up to urge me to decide for God, but my heart seemed immovable, and exhausted by strong emotion, and, somewhat quieted by the reflection that it was not for me to limit the mercy of God, I slept.

Wherefore was it that, at this favorable moment, I could not bring myself to accept the mercy of God? Was it that I had not yet been sufficiently humbled to come into sympathy with the cross of Christ?—to apprehend His sacrificial death, as necessary to procure a reconciliation between a holy God and a sinful human soul?

When I awoke the next morning, I felt deep

distress, keen remorse ; feeling that I had rejected the Saviour, and that my doom was sealed. The distress continued some hours ; I had the sympathy of my parents, they felt deeply for me, but could give me no relief. The sense of guilt for the rejection of Christ, far exceeded all the former reproaches of my conscience for my transgression of the law of God.

The sermon on this Sabbath morning was founded upon John vii. 37—"In that last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." It was a gospel sermon, but its effect on me was only to deepen my consciousness of guilt for rejecting such a free salvation. But as I reflected upon it during the intermission, my mind was exercised in the same manner that it had been in the night previous, but my heart was not subdued.

Though my distress was great I thought I had no feeling. From this time forward I had similar seasons of mental distress, but could never see my *ability* to yield to Christ.

The degree of anguish which I experienced gradually diminished, as objects of sense resumed

their prominence, so that after a time, I was merely gloomy and unhappy, for though mental struggles had not entirely ceased, they were rendered powerless by the consideration that to strive now was of no avail.

This failure in what I had considered a real effort to become a Christian was a point to which I ever after looked back; and in thus looking back, found the difficulties in the way of life greatly increased.

STRUGGLES WITH UNBELIEF.

It was not possible that after having had my conscience so far enlightened in respect to duty, and my soul so deeply stirred in view of eternal realities, I could quietly settle down in entire indifference to those momentous considerations. I continued to reflect much, and was constantly learning something of the evil of my own heart. Thus I went on for two or three years. A memorandum made in Feb., 1828, exhibits my state at that time. "I daily take notice of the feelings of my own heart, with reference to the concerns of another world, and though nothing of happiness has a share in the dark review, it may not be time lost to recollect privileges with which I have been constantly surrounded, and the misimprovement which has marked my path in life. I have enjoyed uninterrupted health, I have been able constantly to attend public worship, both on the Sabbath and during the week. On these occasions I have heard the most faithful instructions, warnings, and exhortations.

If the use of means would avail to save the soul, I should not now have to lament the indifference which I feel on the subject of greatest moment. I occasionally hear a sermon which I apply more particularly to myself, and which for a time awakens my feelings, and excites my desires to seek anew for that ‘Pearl of price immense,’ religion; but as I am never enabled to come directly to the point, and actually commence the work, nor to form any firm resolution with respect to it, worldly cares very soon intrude and destroy all the good effect of the truth, I feel condemned every meeting that I attend, because I hear in vain.”

Another record a month or two later says: “Shall I begin with bemoaning my hard lot, in being condemned to a life so wretched, or that I did not receive my birth in a heathen land; rather shall I not lament that I ever had a being. But these are sinful repinings. It better becomes me to humble myself for the cause of the daily misery which preys upon my mind. My own hard, obstinate, impenitent heart. My constant experience is a practical comment on the passage of Scripture, ‘There is no peace to the wicked.’

I feel within me a heart entirely averse to that which is right and good, totally disinclined to yield to the dictates of reason and conscience, and therefore, 'unfit to live and unfit to die.' ”

In similar self-accusations, and reflections, I met another season of awakening in 1829, and as I again felt stirred up to make some efforts to secure a blessing, I became aware of, the terrible power of unbelief. My constant complaint was: I cannot realize anything. I visited my pastor several times, but there was such bondage upon my soul—such a consciousness of pride, hardness and unbelief, as kept me shut up from any free expression of mind. So I made no advance. I seemed to myself ever to be going back—the blindness of my mind constantly to increase. I expressed myself thus on one occasion: “If the clearest views of duty could move me to attempt anything to overcome the blindness and unbelief of my mind, I should not be carried along by the current without putting forth some efforts to escape impending destruction. I assented to all the truth advanced by Dr. R——, my own experience corresponded with what he said, but yet nothing appears real, an impenetrable dark-

ness overspreads everything on which my mind rests,"—and again, "The sermon yesterday was on the dignity of our nature, and how greatly those degrade it who live in sin. I was much affected, that I had lived so below the design of my being, and that my case had become so hopeless because of my inability to realize the truth."

In 1831 there was also an interesting revival of religion, in which an intimate friend was converted, who had walked with me in my dark and gloomy way, and now exerted her influence to lead me into the shining path on which she had entered ; but my bonds were still too strong upon me. The fear of total abandonment of God kept me watchful against any voluntary loss of interest in the subject of salvation. This state of mind I referred to in 1833 in this manner: "In addition to the solemn sermon I heard yesterday, the reading of an article in the *Evangelist*, entitled the 'Eleventh Hour,' caused me very dismal feelings. The design of it was to show that persons may in very early life pass the eleventh hour as respects their salvation. This one idea is to me what the sword suspended from the roof was to Damocles." Thus I went on still.

When alone I was continually pondering upon the one subject, thinking, and contriving, for some way of deliverance from my misery,—as though I was under the necessity of getting myself into a position where truth could act upon my mind. What is truth? would often be my mental inquiry.

At one time I proposed to myself entering upon a thorough review of the evidences of Christianity; but as I had already heard and read much in that direction, I felt little encouragement in such a method of counteracting the sceptical tendencies which were increasing upon me,—for as the knowledge of such evidences had not been sufficient to keep me from falling into this state, I could not see that reviewing it would have power to help me out of it. I often sought, by meditating intently, to arrive at the realization of God and spiritual things, but when I seemed to be approaching such a result, I would find my mind thrown into confusion, and darker than ever.

Then I discovered that my mind was weak—it was too undisciplined to grasp the great idea—I must strengthen it to the mighty effort—

I must train it to patient thought. I took up mathematical study. I found I could hold my mind to the solving of a problem. I could carry it through and attain the result—Truth—mathematical truth.

It was not then my intellect that was so much at fault. It became clear to me that the state of my heart was the cause of my ill-success. I saw there were many of very small powers and advantages, who were excellent Christians ; I remembered particularly a poor colored man, who lived near us, and who could not read at the time of his conversion, and I could not avoid the feeling, that being a friend of God, he was greatly my superior.

I felt my unworthiness, from having lived below my knowledge of duty. “Ye knew your duty but ye did it not,” was a sentence terrible to me.

And yet I felt that I could do nothing—and in reviewing the past could fix on no point, my feelings being what they were, at which I could have done differently. The question would then come up : If I am fatally bound to do just what I do, is there any power to resist evil ? Is not the

thief, the murderer, and every other doer of out-breaking sin also excused? That, of course, was ground I could not take, but it seemed to be what my position would inevitably lead to. The whole bent of my soul was away from God—that was plain. God commanded me to repent—to turn about. I was a creature of will, and my will was to go *from* God. How then of itself could that same will—will contrary to itself. It was a real impossibility, I said,—I could not repent. Notwithstanding I thus reasoned out my case, and proved to myself that there was nothing for me to do, I would find myself at short intervals taking a fresh survey of my state and prospects.

At one such time I wrote the following as the result of my examination. Respecting the future, these were my fears :

1. *Fear* of being entirely abandoned of God and given up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind.
2. *Fear* that friends, those who have heretofore manifested some interest in my welfare, will become weary of any efforts in my behalf, seeing me continue so hardened and indifferent.

3. *Fear* that though repentance now appears impossible to me, in the future I shall see things in so different a light that self-condemnation will be unavoidable.

4. *Fear* of the Providences of God (if I live), the death of friends, that the effect will be only to harden in sin.

Other present sources of unhappiness.

Seeing those with whom I have formed attachments, leave me to walk in the narrow path, and thereby losing all sympathy with me, and attachment for me.

Continual consciousness of unfitness to perform aright any of the duties of life.

The thought that as there are but two great divisions of the human family, I belong to that which embraces all the most vile and worthless of the human race.

I was accustomed to consider this verse of a hymn as descriptive of my state :

“Deep are the wounds that sin has made,

Where shall the sinner find a cure ?

In vain, alas ! is nature’s aid,

The work exceeds all nature’s power.”

When in January, 1834, a protracted meeting was held in the church which I attended, I

hesitated to engage in it, fearing that by so doing I should only become more hardened, but as my pastor urged his people to attend continuously, that "peradventure they might receive the knowledge of the truth"—with the assurance that it would at least do them no harm, I determined that I would go, and try once more and finally, to secure the favor of God. I was therefore solicitous that all my little plans of business should be so arranged as to demand neither time nor thought—and thus, as respected externals, I was well prepared. The opening sermon by Dr. P., was quite encouraging to me, and was followed by one from Prof. H., searching in its character, and leading me to see that I might have been cherishing the idea that I was abandoned by God, as a shield against conviction, so I put that aside. The next sermon by Dr. T., from the text, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God," was a graphic description of my past course in treating the claims of God, and I saw with perfect clearness the sure downward progress of my future, unless I should come to a decision now to turn.

As in times past, my heart drew back. I was willing to hear all the truth, but could not resolve freely to commit myself to any course of action, lest I should fail of success, and I knew full well the painful feelings attending such a result. I therefore, in a worldly, selfish view, considered it only a prudent regard to my own comfort to avoid beginning to seek religion, unless I could be so strong in my determination to do it, as to be sure of success.

A sermon on the goodness of God, I heard without one feeling in unison with the subject, but one by Prof. H., from the words, "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant," came to me as a powerful call to duty. The conflict in my soul under the fearful weight of responsibility laid upon the sinner—the fear of being finally given up of God, unless I then decided for Him, on the one hand—on the other, the absolute impossibility, as it appeared to me, of such a decision, held me in great distress.

As the subject was pressed home upon the conscience of the hearer at the close of the sermon, and all were urged to come to some decision, I felt able to endure it no longer, and I said men-

tally "I will pray." That moment the preacher said: "Perhaps some of you will say, I will pray"—he proceeded to show that this alone was not sufficient, but it must be accompanied with a hearty purpose of immediate submission to God. Not being ready for this, I went home greatly troubled, and thenceforward had no peace from day to day. My experiences were not greatly varied from those of a few past years, only that I had made some advance in the knowledge of that truth of the word of God, which declares that "The carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Previously I had found that it was my will which held out against God, but there always seemed to be something back of my will, which was not under my control and which governed that power. Now my own freedom seemed assured to me, and I saw and felt that I had no excuse for my rebellion against God's method of salvation, that it would be right in Him to leave me to my own way. I saw that I did not like His way, making me as it did wholly dependent. I had wanted to do all and to have all the glory. In truth, I was too proud to accept salvation as a

free gift. I could not now get away from the uncomfortable thoughts which continually passed upon my mind—mortifying considerations touching my own weakness—the consciousness of the unworthiness of my course, the insincerity of my endeavors.

I still retained my class in the Sabbath-school, though with great reluctance. I was held there chiefly by the fear of removing myself from religious responsibility, and the want of a good excuse to offer to my fellow-teachers, if I should take that step.

The latter objection was removed in the spring of 1835. I was called by duty to the sick to abandon the post of teacher.

While watching the declining health of a loved sister I was brought to consider the ways of Providence, and I felt that it would have been righteous if God had called me rather than her to this situation, for as it had seemed that by my example I had been a hindrance to the salvation of others, if I was removed there might be hope for those of the family who were now impenitent, that they would be converted.

The last words of the dying one were very im-

pressive—it was not so much the words uttered as the deep seriousness and earnestness of her manner, which dwelt upon my mind, it made religion more of a reality than I had felt it to be for a long time.

After H. had breathed her last, I was tenderly affected with the thought, which I also expressed to the family, that it was a *mercy* that neither of us who were unprepared were taken.

I found that the hardness with which I had braced myself to bear my mental trials, gave me no strength to sustain this affliction. My health suffered under sleepless nights, and I journeyed for its restoration.

During this absence from home, when passing over a portion of country, I was brought into company with Mr. Sutton, the English missionary to India. As we approached N——, we came in the midst of most lovely scenery, the moon rose in beauty and the air was soft and clear. We had reached the base of a long, steep hill; one proposed walking. We alighted from the stage. Mr. Sutton accompanied me, and as we walked, he inquired of me respecting my spiritual state. I told him I had no hope, but that I had often been interested in respect to my salvation.

He said there was no middle ground between infidelity and Christian faith. He expatiated on the happiness of the ways of religion—on the demand for the energies of all in the work of converting the world, and on the account to be rendered at the last day. He said he should pray for me, and should remember that walk when far distant in India.

After our return to the stage Mr. Sutton proposed singing, and lined for that purpose a hymn of his own, entitled *Christian Hope*. The singing, in connection with the previous conversation, quite melted me. The hymn, so adapted to move my feelings, caused me to bitterly regret that I had cut myself off from the hope which it described. Mr. Sutton journeyed on, but left for me a copy of his hymn.

On the back of the card was written: "The way of life is briefly this—know thyself as thou art—Christ as He is, thus coming to Him, He will in no wise cast thee out," and within the envelope, "Even now seek the hope to which the annexed hymn refers, then shall we again meet in heaven." "The Master is come and calleth for thee." The effect of this conversation on me

was to bring me back into the great class of the impenitent, who might be addressed with hope on the subject of salvation, instead of allowing me to hold myself as separated, by the peculiarity of my case, from other unbelievers.

The card, with its appropriate words, was a solemn memento to me, especially the last quotation. I carefully preserved the token—the scene here described was often in my mind, and the wish would now frequently arise that I could fully relate my past soul-history to some sympathizing person, to know if there could be a ray of hope for one so lost; if such a thing had ever been known as one who had so far departed from God ever being reclaimed. But when I examined my own heart I could see nothing to give the least encouragement—all was dead there.

Still the subject was so interesting that I could not avoid thinking upon it if I was never to have any part or lot in the great salvation, and I was often longing to give expression to these thoughts, that I might relieve my burdened mind.

After another scene of family affliction in 1836, when absent from home, I heard a sermon from

the text, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." The preacher commenced his sermon with remarking upon the great benefit often derived by individuals in communicating their religious perplexities to a Christian friend, particularly to their pastor—he urged this course as a duty. I then thought that when I returned home I would seek an interview with my pastor, but, upon considering what I should have to say, and what would be my feelings in speaking of my experience, I felt it to be too humiliating to be told. I then determined to write, and did there commence, but was met by the same difficulties as existed in the other method of accomplishing the object—my entire inability to calculate upon results. I concluded at length to leave it to accident to furnish me with an opportunity to declare my mind's history.

In looking around for some other one than my pastor in whom I might have confidence to enable me to speak freely, I supposed I had wandered so far into the labyrinth of sin that none but a person of great wisdom and experience could follow me and guide me out.

I tried to get rid of the impression, but whenever I heard anything to stir my heart, this act would always rise up before me as something to be done before any progress could be made.

The principal ideas that revolved in my mind were, the obligation to *do* and to *believe*, and these two were perpetually running into each other.

If I thought of the obligation to do one, the other always presented itself as requiring to be done first.

At length, I obtained a more simple view, and my thoughts dwelt more upon *doing* the will of God—I could not feel satisfied to leave the world and go to my final account with anything undone that I knew I *could* do, and I knew I could, in form at least, offer prayer to God, and read His word, with the design of thus seeking Him, even though my mind was so dark that my efforts would seem a mockery.

I proposed to myself a favorable time to commence, but, when the time arrived, I found there was always something to prevent: each day as it came brought other occupations, and I became fully convinced that the will was still reluctant.

I then thought I should never begin unless I was placed in such a situation that I could not avoid *determining* to do so immediately,—such a situation, as it was what I dreaded more than any other thing, I knew I should not place myself in, and I could not be surprised into it because I was guarded at all points.

Here, then, the struggle seemed likely to rest. What, I sometimes enquired, would be the result?—where should I be if I should venture to *let go* the undefined something to which I seemed to cling? I had no confidence in God,—I had nothing to hope for from justice, and I could realize no mercy.

During all this period which I have described, I carried with me a most painful sense of worthlessness, leading me often to wish that I could shut myself from society, and from the face of creation. I did not wish to die, but I could look forward to nothing desirable in life.

Such, in my interior life, was the effect of my early “*lost opportunity*” to embrace an offered Saviour; and I owe it entirely to sovereign, abounding grace that that was not my *last opportunity*.

THE DAWN OF FAITH AND HOPE.

One link in the chain of influences which led me, as I hope, at last to God, I have thus far omitted to mention. The night following the sermon of Prof. H——, of which I made particular mention, I felt that I had vowed and I could not go back. I had said, under the solemn sense of the claims of God upon me, “I will pray.” In order that I might have no hindrance, but a help in carrying out this promise, I entered into an agreement with a sister, unconverted like myself, to alternate with me in this exercise. This agreement secured a good degree of constancy in its observance, but, in respect to my part in the duty, I was always ashamed of it, because I regarded it as merely heartless and formal. But, at the period up to which I have brought my narrative, it was particularly trying to me. To come before God and ask Him to make me willing to serve Him, when I was conscious I had no sincere desire for His service—or even to be made willing—and to ask Him

to enlighten my mind, when I did not even read the Word which He had given as a "light to our feet and a lamp to our path," was an inconsistency so apparent to my mind that I never laid my head upon my pillow in peace. I would, however, partly resolve that the next day I would give some attention to the Scriptures, but when the time came, and I thought of doing so, it seemed so useless to do it that I only broke my resolution day after day.

About this time, I became more interested in meetings. At the prayer meetings, when the case of the unconverted was mentioned, I felt that I might have some interest in those prayers.

On Thursday evening, Nov. 7th, the pastor preached from: "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." This sermon brought very plainly to my consciousness that it was the *choice* of the mind only of which sin could be predicated. One remark in this discourse seemed intended for me, "You are not abandoned." One of the hymns was also very interesting to me, and afterwards dwelt much upon my mind.

It was the hymn commencing thus :

“Jesus, Thy blessings are not few.”

The lines which I received as especially applicable, were :

“His gospel and His heart have room
For rebels such as you ” ;

and,

“No mortal has a just pretence
To perish in despair.”

When the next verse in course was the subject of remark, “And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3 : 5), I was much interested, and the thought came into my mind, Why should I feel this interest if I am abandoned by God ?—Perhaps this interest is the influence of the Holy Spirit, and if so, I will do nothing to resist it, but follow all its promptings, and it is possible I may yet obtain salvation. The idea, *It is possible*, dwelt much upon my mind all the remainder of the week.

At this time, though there was no marked religious attention, there were a few individuals seriously disposed, so that an enquiry meeting was appointed occasionally.

The wish now arose in my mind to attend that meeting should one be appointed on the

following week, but I would not decide upon doing this until I had heard the sermons of the sabbath. When, on that occasion, I heard the text announced, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me," I felt disappointed, thinking I should not be interested, as I had rather calculated on something similar to the discourse on Thursday evening, as best adapted to lead me to a decision. But almost the first sentence came home to my mind with power, and I involuntarily hung down my head to hide my emotion.

As the sermon proceeded, it seemed to lay open my whole heart to my view. I feared to raise my head lest others should read in my countenance what was passing within. I had, at different times before, had the same feelings in separate views of truth; but now all seemed concentrated. It was shame chiefly which oppressed my mind as I saw how entirely sinful was my heart, as opposed to the holiness of God. I said mentally, "Then there is no help for it, I cannot go to the enquiry meeting for it will be of no use." I sat there as a condemned criminal, having not one word of excuse to offer.

At the close of the sermon, the pastor related

an anecdote of a gentleman in B—— who had been often awakened, but, after coming up to a certain point in his religious efforts, always went back to his worldliness. His pastor on going to him and conversing with him on the subject, ascertained that he was neglecting to sign his name to an instrument that would convey property out of his family, though it was just that he should do so. He was then induced to perform this act of justice, and soon found the peace of God.

As I went home reflecting upon the subject, I thought that if there was anything in my case that thus prevented my experiencing the mercy of God, it was my wisest course to search it out and relinquish it. My mind was wholly absorbed with this subject during the intermission. At length, as I was going to the afternoon meeting, I came to the conclusion that the obstacle in my way was selfishness or unbelief in this form. Whenever I felt interested enough in religion to think of entering upon it as a present concern, the fear that I should not succeed, and thus suffer shame, would prevent my doing anything, and I would determine to wait until I could take up a resolution strong enough to insure success. I

therefore at once put aside this obstacle, and resolved to yield myself entirely to the guidance of God's spirit, and determined now to go to the enquiry meeting.

One was appointed to be held on Monday evening a half hour preceding the usual prayer meeting of the church. I looked forward to it with great interest all day, and was quite decided about going. I said to myself, "I will go, come what will." About an hour before the time for meeting, all that influence which had led me thus far deserted me, and I could see no reason why I should go. I felt no desire whatever to do so, and I could not recall the motives which led me to the determination, but I had said I would go, and I feared to draw back. I therefore went with a faltering purpose ; but when I reached the head of the stairs leading to the conference room, I was so undecided in which meeting to go, that I stopped on the landing to reconsider my determination. I felt so entirely balanced that it seemed as if a breath of air would turn me. I said, what shall I do? While I thus stood the pastor came up and went into the church-room and shut the door. How could I then go and

open the door ; it seemed impossible. Soon the door opened, and I quickly stepped in. But I felt sadly out of place. I had not one feeling in unison with the design of the meeting, and nothing that was said then, seemed to have any application to me, so that on returning home I said to my mother that I was sorry I went.

That night and a part of the next day, I painfully felt that by going there I had got myself into trouble, and was meditating the possibility of escaping with credit, but I did not see that I could. I had committed myself and could not go back. I could not think of attending another meeting feeling as I then did, so something must be done, and this I felt must be, to begin immediately to seek God by reading the scriptures and prayer.

My mind drew back from this as of no avail, despairing thoughts would rise, which I would put back with one line of a hymn,—

“Hence then ye black, despairing thoughts.”

I had all my old feelings respecting failure if I should attempt. I became very wretched, and wanted sympathy. I would not seek it of friends at home, for I had too often drawn upon them

already in this way, to no purpose. Then I thought of —, but feared she would comfort me, and I knew *that* was not what I needed then—it was decision. Another friend I longed to go to, but concluded I might as well remain at home, as none of these friends could help me, the work being between God and my own soul.

I then felt that the responsibility was all my own, and if I failed of a wise decision the loss would be all my own. Rebelling that I had ever had an existence, a remark made by the pastor in the church-room came to my mind. He said it was great goodness in God to lead us to feel enough interest in the subject of salvation to come there—another remark was, “you are not alone.” I could not see the goodness, and I did feel that I was wholly alone, and utterly weak in a fearful struggle. But motives and considerations began to come up to influence me in a right choice, death-bed admonitions had power—but more than all, the view of my own heart, which was opened to me the last Sabbath. This sinful, worthless character, I felt would be confirmed to me, I should bear it through life, and into eternity unless I should now make a wise decision.

Then the question came up. If I at this time give up all interest in this great concern, what will it be for, what will be the price? The answer was—The present gratification of selfishness and pride. Burning shame then covered me with confusion, at the thought of so degrading a choice. But what could I do? I could do what I had so often before felt the obligation to do. I could pray, at least in form, with the definite purpose of obeying God, my prayers I knew would be worthless and insincere. I could read the bible, though my mind was so blinded that it seemed as if it would be of no use, just like reading an unknown language.

Then Dr. H——'s question in the church-room presented itself to me.

“What are you willing to do?” I now decided what portion of time I would devote to this concern, and falteringly said, *I'll try*. That moment I felt that in doing thus I had fallen in with God's design in influencing my mind. Then I had a delightful sense of the goodness of God. It now appeared as if I was occupying a different position with respect to God—my attitude of re-

sistance was changed to that of submission. I experienced great comfort in this change, and instead of at a great distance, God appeared near, and "waiting to be gracious."

I supposed I should have more such conflicts to pass through, but having taken one important step, others I concluded would be less difficult. Freedom from the wretched spirit of resistance imparted so much ease and comfort, that in the course of the next day, I could not but hope that my will had truly submitted to the will of God. In enjoying this I scarcely thought of wanting anything more, but soon I began to consider what was the next thing to be done.

This I saw was to believe in and accept of Christ as my Saviour. My mind yet remained dark, though the next day I felt still more comfort, and I looked forward to the meeting of the evening with the hope that I might there learn my duty, but nothing was said adapted to my case, as I thought. I was, however, sensible of great difference in my feelings from what I had formerly experienced, under the dispensation of the truth, when I had resisted the call to duty. The subject of the lecture was the Christian life,

its self-denial, and effort. A few remarks at the close, addressed to the impenitent, I tried in vain to apply to myself, and I went away quite discouraged, that there was nothing for me. Then I began to question the reality of my recent feelings. Could they have been all a delusion? When I reviewed the experience of the week, and thought of the different effect produced upon my mind by the sermon of this evening, from what I had formerly experienced, when hearing those of a similar character. While *then* I hugged my chains the closer, thankful that I had no such hard life to lead, and *now* I felt that I should be willing to cast in my lot with the people of God, I could not but see the hand of God in it, and I said, If God has begun a good work in my soul, He will carry it on.

“The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne’er forsakes.”

I could then feel great confidence, that having brought me thus far, God would not leave me here in the dark. The two following days I enjoyed the same confidence in a happy result.

My mind was occupied with hymns, and words of scripture adapted to my feelings, which flowed

into my mind so freely, that I wondered whence they came. I did not know that I could remember so many. I also thought more of Christ and desired to believe on Him. My life, too, seemed more valuable to me. I had lost that dreadful sense of worthlessness, which had rendered so unhappy several of the past years of my life.

Sabbath morning I anticipated the meetings of the day with great pleasure, the humming of a simple psalm tune by one of the family, brought into my mind a delightful sense of its sweetness. I went to meeting with far different feelings than ever before. As I walked, I thought of the wisdom and power of God displayed in subduing my will. I had thought that there was no way in which this could be done without a miracle, but it had been accomplished in perfect harmony with my own powers. This scripture then came into my mind, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men," and I said, Jesus has conquered. Just before service commenced I lost all these pleasant views, and was thrown into the greatest darkness and confusion of mind, and as was my habit, fell to reasoning upon it, and questioning

the reality of my recent exercises. Could they be a delusion, when they had seemed to me, above all things else, realities, but I could recover no light.

I thought that if I should give up these experiences, as real and the work of God, I must give up the whole subject; this I could not be willing to do. I was in great perplexity, there was no enquiry meeting appointed, and the pastor was to leave town on the morrow.

I therefore determined to call on him before the evening meeting. When I did this I was able to give but a very imperfect account of my state of mind; however, the call was of use to me. Dr. H—— would not pronounce any opinion upon my state, but advised me to give up questioning concerning the past and give a serious, direct attention to the subject of personal salvation, and, said he, “Be thorough, and remember that you are not alone.”

With these words sounding in my ears, I spent several days in reviewing my past course of unbelief and rejection of Christ, and, in doing this, I felt so oppressed with shame on account

of it that I realized that it was indeed "an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God."

Though my darkness was so entire that I could compare it to nothing but wading through a thick, dark cloud, and I said, "I am indeed alone," yet, even then came over me a sense of the nearness of Christ, and the goodness of God, by which I was encouraged still to seek for deliverance.

At one time, the question, Whether I was indeed willing to give up all things for Christ? pressed itself upon me. In the first place, my heart? I said, yes, freely: then came the enquiry concerning my talents,—my influence,—my property,—I felt that to each I could give the same response. Then, Should I be willing to leave father, mother, friends and country, should God require? This question, I said, I need not decide, as in no probability should I be called to act upon it. But the question pursued me, and I could not cast it away from my mind. I said, then, the favor of God I must have at whatever cost, and then in my imagination, there passed before me a most solemn scene of separation from friends, causing me great anguish, but I felt

willing to give up all, and was much affected by the hymns commencing,

“And must I part with all I have,
My dearest Lord for Thee?”—

and,

“Be all my heart and all my days
Devoted to my Saviour’s praise.”

Still no light came, and I saw not how I should ever obtain any.

To believe was a mental act, and how it was to be performed I could not understand—I could not expect any more evidence of the truth of revelation.

One thing I saw I could do. I could acknowledge my unbelief, which I had always been particularly unwilling should be known. My pastor at this time was absent, and I considered it of no use to go to any other person,—and therefore remained much at a stand until after his return.

As soon as possible after I knew of his arrival home, I called at his house, but was told that he was so occupied that he could not see me. At first, I was much disappointed, and ready to weep, but on further thought, I was rather glad, for by going there I had given expression to

my willingness to submit to the humiliation. I hoped I should be excused from the act.

Sunday evening, January 1st, I attended an enquiry meeting. The pastor addressed all present, offering for our immediate acceptance the provisions of the gospel, and urging their reception.

It seemed appropriate to my present condition, but I could not receive a word of it because I had not yet acknowledged my unbelief; this seemed to stand between me and the truth to which I had been listening.

When the meeting was concluded, Dr. H—— said if any one wished for conversation with him, such could remain. I did so, that I might remove the obstacle in my way.

I hoped to be able to express myself with composure and dignity, but, the moment my pastor spoke to me, I involuntarily covered my face with my hands and bowed my head in shame. Dr. H—— inquired what progress I had made. As soon as I could answer, I replied that nothing I heard had any effect upon me because of my unbelief; that it was of no more use to preach to me than to preach to the dead

out there in their graves; that I had rejected and disbelieved every truth in the Bible, and now there was nothing left me even to begin with. He enquired if I had any speculative difficulties, to which I gave a negative, and then, "If I did feel that the world was insufficient to satisfy the desires of my heart?" and "If I did not feel that nothing but the favor of God could?"

Having replied affirmatively to these interrogatories, he said that was making progress,—was getting a good way. I went home somewhat encouraged, though much oppressed with shame for the exposure of my weakness. I now thought to get along without again going to my pastor for help.

I read a sermon by Mr. Edwards, entitled, "The Wisdom of God displayed in the Way of Salvation." I read it with great interest. The character of Christ appeared more attractive than ever before; my views of the truth concerning the way of life more clear; but I did not see how my intellect could help me here. It could give me no power to make application of my knowledge to the necessities of my soul.

I again resorted to the assistance of my pastor,

visiting him on Thursday, Jan. 5th. I told him that I did not know of anything more that I could do; that I was willing to do anything to obtain the favor of God, if I knew what was necessary. Dr. H—— urged upon me submission to God. I said I was not conscious of any opposition. He enquired if I was conscious of an opposite state of mind,—of a pleasedness with the character of God. I knew not how to frame an answer, for my mind was not on that track. He then went on to say that I had arrived at that point from which I must either go back or forward. I said I had no wish to go back. But you must, said he, unless you will now go forward.

Seemingly aware that he was not meeting the course of my thoughts, he changed his method, and, in his most happy manner, proceeded to spread before me the provision of the gospel. Then said he, “are you willing to come to Christ and accept the free gift of His mercy?” I answered in all simplicity and truth, “I think I should be, if I but knew the way.” “It is faith in the Redeemer that you need,” said the pastor quickly.

Never did any words fall so gratefully upon my ear, for then I felt assured that my state of mind was understood. The pastor repeated, in application to me, the passage of Scripture: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." He told me to ask God to give me faith, and, as I rose to leave, said, "I expect yet to see you a happy disciple."

For the first time in my life, I went away from such an interview satisfied. The words of my pastor dwelt upon my mind, and the encouragement they afforded me was so great that I could not refrain from weeping in view of the possibility of experiencing so great a mercy. In the evening, I attended the lecture. The first hymn read was, to me, very impressive. It came to my heart in a manner I had never before experienced. It was the following:

"Where is my God? does he retire
Beyond the reach of humble sighs?
Are these weak breathings of desire
Too languid to ascend the skies?"

"Look up, my soul, with cheerful eye,
See where the great Redeemer stands,
The glorious Advocate on high,
With precious incense in His hands!"

“He sweetens every humble groan,
 He recommends each broken prayer;
 The softest call before His throne
 May rise, and find acceptance there.

“Teach my weak heart, O, gracious Lord,
 With stronger faith to call Thee mine;
 Bid me pronounce the blissful word,
 My Father, God, with joy divine.”

The second hymn read was the one commencing:

‘Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain,’ —

It had a similar effect upon my mind as the first. The text was: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” The sermon was interesting to me—but it was so, because I felt that it was designed for my benefit, rather than because of its communicating any new light to my mind. On my return home, my thoughts were deeply occupied with the subject of the lecture and its apparent design, and I felt that, since my pastor was willing to do so much to guide me in the right way, it would be unpardonable negligence in me should I fail to use all my own powers in striving to obtain a knowledge of the way of salvation, so that when I retired, I did it with the determination not to

sleep until I had found the way of acceptance with God.

As I attempted to address myself to Him in prayer, all my efforts seemed so weak and worthless that I could only sigh, and groan, and weep; still I could not give up the object. The words of the first hymn sung at the meeting, particularly the third verse, was a great help to me. My feelings continued much the same for a long time; but at length I thought I would direct my mind steadily to Christ in His character of Advocate, as expressed in the second verse of the hymn, and in doing this, I felt that I could trust my cause with this "glorious Advocate." I felt then that I had found the WAY—Christ himself was the WAY. I was so affected with the greatness of the mercy that I could not refrain from weeping aloud for a long time.

The first thought that occurred to me on awaking on the morning of Jan. 6th, was, to ascertain if I had lost sight of the WAY, but I found that I could look to it with more confidence than at first. It seemed to be just what I needed, so safe, so good a way; it entirely satisfied me. I saw that through it my many

wants might be supplied. Numerous wants I had; and when I considered what should be my first petition in trying this new way, two prominent objects of desire arose to my mind; these were, that I might have a clear sense of the presence of God, and of the forgiveness of my sins. As, however, the former would only be a terror to me without the latter, I thought that first of all I needed forgiveness, and, in order to obtain that, confession of sin was necessary.

In performing this duty, I felt great tenderness of spirit, frequently stopping to weep, but did not obtain that sense of pardon which I hoped for. I was still trying to look to Christ as Advocate. In a short time, I began to reflect upon His character as a sacrifice for sin. I read the account of His sufferings, and tried to look to Him as my Saviour. My mind became darkened, and I could not tell which way to turn. I had lost sight of my Advocate, and the question arose: Where are now my sins? Do they still cleave to me? At length, two verses of a hymn sung the evening previous came to mind. They were the following:

“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine—

While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

“My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.”

The following passage of Scripture was also brought to my remembrance: “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” I had a distant mental view of Calvary; the two views of the work of Christ became united—sacrifice and intercession, and I saw again the *Way*.

I yet could embrace no hope: I began to think my mind was not sufficiently clear with respect to the meaning of redemption. I took my Bible and studied those passages which speak of Christ as having come to redeem, but I could not feel satisfied that I had accepted of Christ as *my* Redeemer.

Being perplexed, I wished to inform my pastor how my mind had been led, and therefore wrote to him a note expressing my feelings since Thursday. My having done so, however, gave me some trouble the next day, for selfishness in the form of a fastidious taste, began to represent it

as very foolish to have done that,—and I was made quite uncomfortable, for I saw that the evil propensities of my nature still had great power.

This subject occupied my mind all day. In the afternoon, particularly while in church, the sermon failed to enlist my attention, for I was absorbed in reflecting upon the effects of my past course in religion, in yielding to the inferior and debasing powers of my mind—these unworthy and sinful inclinations, pride and unbelief, with the bondage growing out of them, seemed so to have strengthened by indulgence that they rose up before me like mountains, and I felt that, though I might have hope of final conquest, I could never be happy. It seemed as if I was required to go to work to undo all I had been doing for ten years past, and the work seemed so immense that I longed for some sympathizing mind to whom I could unbosom my distress. But I supposed no such one could be found, as I had far outstripped all others in willing bondage to sin. I did not believe there could be a human being able to enter into my feelings. I walked with a friend from church, and on her learning that my mind was again upon the subject of

salvation, she hoped I was not seeking in my own strength. I said no, I had done with that three years ago. On then parting with her, it came to my mind that Christ came to redeem from the *power* as well as the curse of sin, and I felt that I could trust Him to do that for me. I felt a "sweet burning in my heart," the dark clouds rolled gently away, and I experienced the comfort of hope—and I saw why I could not have had it before, as

"The soul is yet but half redeem'd
Where sin the tyrant reigns."

The next morning, I awoke with great comfort in my soul; not a cloud appeared in my horizon but I seemed just like a little child, ignorant, weak, and helpless, and needing to be guided and supported at every step. The words of Christ "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," refreshed and strengthened my soul, for I felt that, in respect to the will of God, I had thus become as a little child.

TRIAL OF PRINCIPLE.

I had entered upon a new life. In the faith I had received, I felt that I possessed a principle which must be acted out in all its appropriate duties. My life must be different from what it had been.—But how ?

At first, the way was plain—for as in nature, so in grace—child-life acted out itself spontaneously, and to tell friends around, and especially the pastor, what the Lord had done for me, was a natural and happy duty ; and so was it to seek the salvation of a dear sister by earnest prayer to God,—and not unnatural was it at that hour to find the wish arise to be joined with others in that service. When here the old spirit of questioning did object, saying : Why not be content to pray alone ? the Scripture response was ready : “ If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven.” To make my way still more clear, I

found on leaving my retirement, a note from a friend requesting me to attend a sisters' prayer meeting.

Thus kindly and gently did the Lord open to me the path of duty, inspiring me with such confidence that I unhesitatingly declared that I would be no half-hearted Christian, but "All that the Lord commanded me I would do, and be obedient." Ex. 24: 7.

I now felt impelled to give my pastor in writing my testimony to the great mercy and wisdom of God; in the method of His grace towards me. The next sermon I heard from him was from the text: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Every word of it met with a joyful response, which was truthfully expressed in the hymn which followed:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
My spirit doth rejoice
In God, my Saviour and my God;
I hear His joyful voice.

"I need not go abroad for joy,
Who have a feast at home;
My sighs are turned into songs,—
The Comforter is come.

"Down from on high, the blessed Dove
Is come into my breast,

To witness God's eternal love :

This is my heav'nly feast.

“There is a stream that issues forth

From God's eternal throne ;

And from the Lamb, a living stream,

Clear as the crystal stone.

“That stream doth water paradise ;

It makes the angels sing ;

One cordial drop revives my heart ;

Hence all my joys do spring.”

My evidences thus far had all been in the line of the instructions I had been accustomed to hear from my spiritual guide in his exhibitions of Scripture truth.

When, however, I went into the Sabbath school to perform the duty of teacher, I felt the effect of my long course of unbelief in this way. Not finding in my heart a realization of the truth I was considering, my old enemies rose up again, leading me to say, I do not believe this, how then can I teach ? This state tried me much. I wept over it abundantly. I went to my pastor and other Christian friends for help in my distress, but no one of them could understand the nature of my trouble.

A few passages of Scripture which had been

wrought into my heart-experience, possessed a spiritual power unknown before—but as to the great mass of truth upon which I had been speculating for years, the living power of the Spirit had not yet entered into it, it lay dead in my mind.

I had thought that I should receive back in Christ all that realization of God in His works of creation, and in His word, which I had lost.

Though sorrowful, I determined not to abandon duty. I entered into a close examination of the motives which had led me so earnestly to desire light, and was convinced that the wish to be happy, and to be able to perform my duties with credit, had been more prominent than the desire to glorify God. I saw, too, that I had been trying after my former plan to regain a feeling sense of truth, by deep reflection, through my own powers, instead of looking to Christ, as the great teacher—the prophet of the church. I saw that I was required to trust in the Lord with all my heart, and not lean to my own understanding. That I must give up all *dependence* upon my own powers, and thus I felt that I should be stripped of everything that I had called my own, that

henceforth I was to live a life of faith. I felt then exceedingly weak, having so little of this precious grace, but remembering the manna in the wilderness, which the children of Israel received in portions just enough for present use, but none to lay up, I “encouraged myself in the Lord.”

After this, as I was reflecting upon the same subject, this verse of scripture came very delightfully to my mind: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” 1 Cor. 1:30. I did not remember ever to have thought of its meaning, but now I felt that it was explained in my own experience, and I understood it as I could have done by no other teaching—I saw that feeling my guilt, and looking to Christ as an atoning sacrifice, I had received him as my righteousness, and when finding myself bound down under the dominion of evil propensities, I had trusted Christ to redeem me from their power, I hoped I had received him for sanctification, and now with a clear view of my ignorance of the things of the spirit, it was equally plain to me that all true *wisdom* must come to me from

the same source, my hopes of possessing any of my own were at an end.

To be so dependent was humiliating, and at first repulsive to my mind, but when I considered that I might obtain all that I needed from this infinite fountain, I felt that I could adopt the apostle's determination to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified," and it seemed sweet to be thus dependent.

For a short time after this happy experience, I was better established, and though the scriptures were still dark to me, they were daily becoming more interesting.

As all the light and strength I had received had been bestowed when going forward in duty, I hoped that in making a public profession of religion I should receive that assistance which I needed to become established in the faith, and to enable me to be useful in the world.

I had for some time felt it to be a privilege to be numbered with the people of God, but my ignorance was yet so great that I scarcely dared to consider it a duty. I was still slow of heart in making application of the instruction I had received, and proved the small degree of confi-

dence I placed in the scripture in settling the important question of a Christian profession.

I read several authors to ascertain the qualifications for membership in the visible church, and when I learned that maturity of experience was not a requisite—that “one who could cry was no less a child than one who could talk or sing,”—I ventured to think that this might be the duty which God now required of me. But as I had yet entered upon the performance of no religious duty without finding a sanction for it in the word of God, I now considered it incumbent upon me to make the final appeal to that source.

As I then viewed a profession of religion only in relation to one of the Christian ordinances, that of the Lord’s Supper, my studies were directed solely to that. When therefore the plain injunction of Christ, “This do in remembrance of me,” came before my mind, enforced by the tender appeal, “If ye love me keep my commandments,” I could hesitate no longer, I felt assured that my Saviour now called me to this service.

After I had thus decided I called upon my pastor to offer myself for membership in the church,

and was propounded for admission on the following Sabbath.

After this interview with my pastor, at which I expressed the want of faith which still troubled me, my mind became quite darkened. I could not find out the cause, but that which chiefly occupied my thought was the want of confidence in God's word. As I wished to go forward intelligently, and do nothing of which I did not understand the design, I took the book containing the articles of faith, and the covenant of the church to ascertain if I was prepared to assent to them.

When I read in the covenant the engagement to receive "Jesus Christ to be my Prophet, Priest, and King," I felt that there was a definite meaning attached to each of these relations. The meaning of the first two, I thought I understood, and to them could heartily subscribe, but I was not so clear with respect to the last. I pondered over it for a long time, but could not be satisfied that its meaning had been unfolded to me.

In this state of mind I visited a Christian friend on the afternoon of Tuesday preceding the first

Sabbath in April, 1837. In the course of my visit, I mentioned to her my intention of going forward on the next Sabbath and uniting with the church. "Do you expect," she enquired, "to obey the command of Christ, 'believe and be baptized?'" I replied I certainly did. Then she said, "As there is a difference of opinion as to what constitutes baptism, you ought to examine for yourself, and though you may be called to make sacrifices, *you*, if any one, ought to be willing to do so, adding, "It is sweet to make sacrifices for Christ."

These words cast a flood of light into my mind, revealing what had been hidden,—an unwillingness to enter upon a course which might require as its result a *sacrifice*.

My soul was thrown into the greatest confusion and distress, which continued for several days. Past thoughts and utterances on this subject, favorable to Baptist sentiments, were brought up to my view, until it seemed as if everything I had ever thought, felt, and said, were present before me ; producing the unwelcome conviction that I had been putting aside the consideration of that duty to avoid self denial and in distrust of the

guidance of God. I was now in great perplexity. The difficulties before me seemed insurmountable. I had gone so far towards a public profession of religion, that I feared to recede—both happiness and credit seemed to be at stake. And then I had so often heard my pastor express his conviction of the slight importance of the *mode* of baptism, that I feared the imputation of weakness of mind by allowing myself to be troubled by it. And further, if I was to act according to the convictions now forced upon me, I should be obliged to leave my own place of worship, my pastor, my circle of Christian friends. Could I be required to do this? Had not God by blessing me there indicated that there was my place? Then nothing but error was a sufficient reason for my leaving it. But with such a conflict in my feelings I could not think of proceeding according to my previous intention. It therefore became necessary for me to inform my pastor, which I did by a note which I handed him after the preparatory meeting on Saturday evening, remarking as I handed it to him, that I had relinquished the design of going forward the next day.

Without knowing the cause of my change of

purpose he said that if I should return to my original intention I could inform him, by leaving a note in the pulpit in the morning.

The note I put into my pastor's hand gave a very full statement of the interview alluded to, and a free expression of the trial of mind following it—a part of which I here give. “I found feelings in my heart which I supposed had no existence there. I was obliged to see that I was unwilling to take up an examination of that subject, lest it might require me to leave my own church and become a Baptist. *That*, I felt, I could not and would not do. My attachment to my own place of worship never seemed so great before, and I felt the same awful opposition to bestow a thought upon the subject thus brought before my mind, that I used to feel when called to attend to the subject of religion.

From that time my mind was so agitated that I was more wretched than I can express. I used all my endeavors to banish from my mind the painful subject; but it was all in vain; my distress was only increased, and I concluded that the only way for me was to enter upon an examination of it. But the time was short, and I could not ex-

pect to obtain any satisfaction on that point before I should be obliged to decide whether to go forward and profess religion or keep back.

I then determined to confine my attention to ascertain what was my duty in respect to coming forward to-morrow; but how was I to decide? As no human being could know exactly what were my feelings, and could not decide for me, I determined to devote a day particularly to this object. I thought that if I was a Christian, I might expect that God would make plain to me my duty in this emergency.

Previous to this, I had felt entirely unwilling to commit the case to God, for I had a will of my own, but yesterday I could say that whatever I saw to be duty in respect to this thing I would do. I have come to the conclusion that I cannot conscientiously publicly dedicate myself to God in my present state of mind. If I should do so, I should never have any stability, so long as it requires so little to agitate and unsettle me, and I should be always liable to wish to undo what I had done.

Neither could I profess that I receive Christ in his office of king as required, being conscious in

my own mind of unwillingness to obey him in all things which he might require of me—and to give up all things for him. A few weeks since, when I thought of professing religion, the subject of baptism came up, but considering myself very blind and ignorant on religious subjects, I concluded that unless the consideration of it was particularly forced upon my mind, I should think nothing of it, but do as my fathers had done before me. When I made the *decision* to profess Christ, the subject of baptism was out of my mind, but when I thought of it previous to Tuesday last, I congratulated myself on having escaped the necessity of agitating it. I regret exceedingly that I have gone so far, I know I shall be subjected to the charge of inconstancy, but I now feel for almost the first time in my life, that it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment. I have to-day uniformly felt that it is not my *duty*, that I should be acting contrary to it, if I were to go forward to-morrow. I am, however, very unhappy about it; it is a great disappointment to me,—but I think no one knowing my feelings would advise me to do differently. What I shall do in the future I do not know, but

I now feel that I shall never want to take another step."

On my return from meeting, in reflecting upon what I had done, I felt the most alarming apprehension that I had done wrong in relinquishing my first determination, which was made in so deliberate a manner, while now I was agitated and hurried in mind, and in the distressing perplexity which this occasioned me, my feelings rose strongly against the instrumentality which had occasioned it.

The tempest in my soul had scarcely subsided the next morning when I set myself to the consideration of the cause of such a tumult, and found a sufficient one, in the rebellious spirit with which I met my present trial, and the impatience which counseled me to give up further attempts to perform duty.

On making this discovery and resolving that I would cheerfully set about the examination of the obnoxious subject, and whenever I had ascertained duty, act accordingly, I experienced a good degree of tranquility. Then the thought occurred to me, "Why cannot I at this moment settle the question?" I am now sure of being

willing to do what God requires, and my *unwillingness* was the chief source of the difficulty. I hastily assumed that I could not unite with the Baptist church on account of "close communion"—against which now that I was required to act in the case, my feelings of dislike were roused.

I could not be baptized, as I supposed, by a Baptist minister to unite with Dr. —'s church, others were sprinkled, and felt that it was right, —and if it was right for them it was right for me. Having thus summarily and superficially decided upon the subject, I availed myself of the opportunity which Dr. — had afforded me to retrace my steps, and sent a note to the pulpit informing him of my return to my first intention.

I accordingly became a member of the — church.

I awoke on the next morning with a keen sense of the want of an approving conscience. I endeavored to derive comfort from the reflection that in the act of the preceding day I had only desired to conform to the will of God, and did not at the time feel that I was in a wrong path. Although this in a measure softened my distress, it did not remove it, as fresh recollections were

continually rushing in upon my mind, convincing me that the commencement of the evil lay farther back, and that God had permitted me to go thus astray, that I might see my want of *entire trust* in the gracious Redeemer, in all those offices in which he has revealed himself to his people.

I was very thoroughly convinced that I had done wrong in putting from me the consideration of my duty in relation to baptism, and I would now gladly have returned to the perplexed situation in which I had found myself the preceding week, could that have been possible.

The bitter thought in my distress was, that what I had done could not be undone. To take up the subject now, after I had entered into covenant with the church, and be subject to the possible necessity of severing this relation, and thus displeasing my pastor, offending the church, and bringing upon myself the charge of fitfulness—these, with other considerations, seemed too terrible to be endured, and I determined to bear what I had thus brought upon myself with as much patience as possible, causing no one to participate in my trials.

But as it had been the “joy of the Lord” that

was my "strength," in losing that, I must give up all hope of usefulness in the service of God, and be unfitted for those duties, in the performance of which I hoped to derive evidence of my union with Christ, and this was to deprive me of all that could make life desirable or existence worth possessing.

I then began to murmur at God's dealings. I had earnestly entreated to be kept from this step if it was not in accordance with the will of God, and yet I had been allowed to go on. Could I then trust God? Wherein was I better than in the service of the world? Would that I had never enlisted in this hard service. But conscience whispered that though I had earnestly prayed to be kept from a wrong course I had been actuated more by regard to my own tranquility and credit than by the wish that God might be glorified in me, and that though this chastening was very grievous it might be designed for my good.

As, often before, appropriate hymns were brought to my mind, and now such as the following had a softening influence :—

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply ;

The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine."

These conflicting thoughts so agitated my mind that when I attempted to pray my rebellious feelings would so obtain the mastery that no desires rose from my heart but such as were expressed by one of old in his disappointment: "Take, I beseech thee, my life, for it is bet er for me to die than to live." During the first three days after the Sabbath, I was so unspeakably wretched that much of the time I could attend to no employment. On Thursday I began to think of relieving my mind by stating my trouble to some experienced Christian ; but I could fix upon no one for this purpose. In the afternoon, however, the pastor called, and I expressed to him my conviction that I had done wrong. He said, he thought I had not, but still advised me now to take up an examination of the subject of baptism.

To have my course marked out for me, gave a little more elasticity to my spirits, but as day after day passed away, and left me without having taken any resolution for immediate action, I was brought to see how great was my reluctance to walk in the path of self-denial.

At length, finding my views of the *way* growing more dark, and my relish for spiritual duties gone, I feared to delay longer a definite known duty, and resolved that I would make all the effort in my power to ascertain what God required of me.

I took my Bible to study what that contained on the subject of baptism, but here I found nothing new—the passages were all familiar and well remembered, so that I obtained no light. I could not see how to make even a beginning in acquiring a knowledge of the doctrine.

The subject assumed a little more of order in my mind when I saw that the particular points of investigation were the four following :

1. The meaning of the word in the original language.
2. The practice of the apostles.
3. The ritual signification of the ordinance.
4. Ecclesiastical history.

With respect to the first, I knew that each side contended that the original word favored, or at least allowed their particular practice, but not understanding Greek myself, I could not appreciate arguments adduced from that source on

either side. I therefore determined to draw no conclusion decisively from that point, but to set that aside.

As to the second, I could never read the instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, with any attention, without receiving the conviction that though much might be said against the act having been in every case immersion, the most natural impression would be that such was their practice.

The third point I had never considered, and here I thought my endeavors might be the most successful. Respecting the fourth, as I wished to confine my examination to the scripture, I thought to leave that as I had done the first.

In settling my judgment on the third topic I saw that I must consult those passages in Romans and Colossians which speak of baptism as a burial. I studied them over and over, with the assistance which I could gain from commentators, but the meaning seemed quite obscure. I pondered over and over again the explanation of spiritual baptism as given in a doctrinal tract "Mode of Baptism," but could make nothing of it.

At length the passage of scripture, "If any

man will *do* his will, he shall *know* of the doctrine," came forcibly to my mind, and set me upon the examination of the temper in which I was engaging in these studies. I found that prejudice was closing my mind against admitting the idea of an allusion to the external rite in those passages referred to. I saw the necessity of a Divine influence, both to illuminate my mind and to make me willing to receive and act out its promptings. I remembered past teachings by which I had learned my dependence upon Christ, as Teacher, for wisdom, and wondered at my folly in refusing to yield my whole soul to his guidance. I saw that now was the time when I needed practically to avail myself of this truth.

Man could not relieve my perplexity, for learning and piety were enlisted on opposite sides, and if I could possess myself of all that had been written upon the subject, I might still remain unsettled in mind, as I had observed that though the learned had controverted this point for years, they were yet far apart. I therefore resolved to give up my own will in the case, and seek for truth.

I set apart a day in which to seek from the Author of all truth, who is Himself the Truth, guidance and direction.

I meditated upon the promises of God; "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God—and it shall be given him." I truly felt my need of wisdom, and, that such as I needed none but God could bestow, and I had such earnestness of desire in pleading for it, that my confidence in God was much strengthened. I still continued searching the scriptures.

I was then for regular Sabbath-school instruction, studying the subject of the resurrection of Christ, and also was reading Flavel, on his humiliation and exaltation. In pursuing the former, I was led to notice how constantly in the preaching of the Apostles, "Jesus and the resurrection" was their theme, and the fact also, that their success was suspended upon the exaltation of Christ as "if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you."

It seemed to me to harmonize with reason and the plan of the gospel church, that as under the old dispensation the religious rites pointed to

Christ, particularly in his work of humiliation—the shedding of the blood of atonement, so under the clearer light of the gospel, the more full exhibition of Christ, as the whole of salvation, that Christ in the completeness of his work, both of humiliation and exaltation, should be symbolized before us, and I could think of no way by which this could be better imaged than had been done, in bringing the last act in the humiliation—the burying, and the first in the exaltation—the rising, together into one ceremony, thus expressing fellowship in his whole character and work.

In reading Flavel I was impressed by this sentiment, “Whatsoever God the Father intendeth to do in and for us, He has first done in our representative Jesus Christ.”

In following that author through the interesting series of discourses referred to, I felt that I gained clearer views of the nature of fellowship with Christ, and though it would be difficult for me to state how, in my mind, it bore relation to the subject that was occupying my attention, as nothing was said of baptism, yet it did contribute to impart greater strength and clearness to the

conviction that this fellowship is to be expressed in all the actions of our lives. By implicit, joyful, obedience to all His commands.

I saw much in baptism, this first public act of the believer, which must call into exercise faith in Christ, inseparable from which is humility—for we do not go out of ourselves and trust in another for that which we deem ourselves sufficient. If we are able to guide ourselves to God and eternal life, why put ourselves under the government and leadership of any one? But if we feel our need of help and defence against the powerful enemies of our souls, and accept the government of Christ, are we true-hearted and sincere unless we come under His reign in His own appointed method?

And then in contemplating the several steps in the exaltation of Christ, His resurrection, ascension into heaven, His mediatorial work, His coming to judgment, and awarding the decision of eternity—I found that these were the truths which I had for a long time been laboring to realize—that God might ever seem a “present God.” I had failed to receive Christ in His

office of *King*, and conscience pointed to the act, which was evidence of my unbelief in this particular.

This sentiment then urged me to duty. "Conscience can demand no more for its satisfaction, nor will it take any less than God demands for His."

Though the prospect now appeared to be that I should become a Baptist, there were too many obstacles in the way, even now that my understanding acquiesced in the correctness of their sentiments, to be easily overcome, so that though my views were more clear and interesting, I was much of the time unhappy.

I often abandoned the subject for a time, but then the Scriptures were so locked up, that I could feel no interest in them, and I was convinced that this was the truth which natural succession required me to understand before any other would be opened to my mind.

The convictions of conscience operating with these views, determined me to take the first step towards a return to the path of duty—to visit my pastor and state to him my feelings, trusting

that if it was the will of God that I should pursue this subject, He would make it still plainer to me.

This step cost me a great effort, but I was, however, so thoroughly convinced that I had been wrong, and had deserted my new principles to walk in an easier path, and avoid self-denial, that it seemed to me that when I should open my mind to my pastor, he would only tell me that if I had done violence to conscience, my only course now was to return and obey its dictates. I felt that being a friend of God, he would desire no less than myself, that I should be in just the place where God would have me to be.

I accordingly visited my pastor May 29th, determining to regulate my future course by the result of this interview. It was but short, furnishing but few remarks which made an impression on my mind. I mentioned as a chief source of my anxiety, that in what I had done I had not felt the "answer of a good conscience," to which he replied that conscience might be ignorant and uninformed, and therefore not to be relied upon, that the question for me to settle was whether the

thing done was itself right. When I referred to my having put aside the subject of baptism when it presented itself to my mind for fear of the result, he said that I had undoubtedly sinned in so doing and must repent. When I spoke of the folly of the reasoning which finally influenced my action, viz.: that others were sprinkled and felt that they were right; therefore, it was right for me to go and do as my fathers had done before me;—he said that was the way most people did, for they were not capable of investigating for themselves.

Thus I saw that he regarded it as adapted only for the learned, whereas I had only common sense to bring to its investigation. I remarked that I thought the scriptures were so plain that the “wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.” He said that in respect to all that was essential to salvation they were. I asked if they were not so in regard to duties; he replied no, for baptism was a very difficult subject.

In conclusion he expressed the wish to have further conversation with me before my decision, and quoted a remark of Dr. Woods, that “there were some minds which nothing could satisfy but

going into the water.” I replied that I did not know but I should be one of that sort.

In reflecting on this conversation, I saw not how I could have any evidence of repentance, unless by doing that which I had been unwilling to do before, my view of its conformity to scripture not being changed.

I could not understand why my pastor made so little account of my convictions of conscience, when in general he enjoined upon his people attention to its gentlest whispers. I came to the conclusion that as he dated the duty of baptism back in infancy, when the subject of it was incapable of exercising faith, he considered faith unnecessary, for otherwise there would be two baptisms, one requiring faith in the candidate and the other not.

At the request of my pastor I wrote out a few of my thoughts on the subject. The following is a part of what I wrote :

“Having been accustomed to consider believers only as proper subjects of baptism, I have been unable to think of it only as a duty to be performed by those who have believed, and as being profitable to the candidate as are other ordinances, when “mixed with faith.”

Commencing thus at a different point in reflecting on this subject, I am unable to appreciate much of the reasoning of those who consider infants suitable subjects for the ordinance.

As the Bible is a book for the common people, I should think that it would follow of course that they should be able to learn from it alone the "first principles of the oracles of God," especially as it contains such promises as, "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." "If any man will *do* His will he shall *know* of the doctrine."

Of the two methods of determining the mode of baptism from the scriptures—the practice of the Apostles, and the meaning of the ordinance—I think that the most natural impression, with respect to the first, on an unprejudiced mind would be that their practice was immersion. * * With respect to the other point. Since the sum of the Apostles' preaching was "Jesus and the resurrection."—"through Jesus, the resurrection of the dead," it seems very natural that the rite which introduced members into the Apostles' fellowship, and by which they expressed their

belief in their doctrine, should be emblematic of this distinguishing fact of the New Testament. If the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart is the thing signified, the effect of this is compared to death and resurrection, “dead unto sin” and “alive unto God;” “risen with Christ.” The power exerted is also compared with that “which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.” Unless these passages which speak of baptism as a burial and resurrection have a reference to the mode of the ordinance, they are very dark indeed to me.

I had thought it unnecessary to bestow any attention upon infant baptism, but it now appeared to me that if it could be supported by the word of God, that, recognizing but “one baptism,” faith could not be required in the candidate, and so conscience would have nothing to do with it—the law of faith not having been violated. I commenced searching the Bible on this point.

I knew there was no direct precept to favor it, but that its supposed authority was based upon the Jewish rite of circumcision. I used my best endeavors to understand the subject, but I could

see no evidence from that institution to infer the obligation to baptize infants. But I found that when God declared He would give a new covenant, He said He would "write His law in their hearts." As far as I had gone in religion, I felt that the law had been written in my heart in *experience* of the truth, and I realized that "no knowledge is so distinct, so clear, so sweet, as that which the heart conveys to the head;" "for indeed sanctification is the very copy or transcript of the word of God upon the heart of man." I wished all my knowledge to be of this kind.

June 8th, I again visited my pastor, and spent a long time in conversation with him. Several suggestions in this interview furnished me with subjects for after reflection.

On the instance of John baptizing in Enon—after giving the usual pedobaptist explanation—he remarked that he did not consider that as Christian baptism. To which I replied, that I supposed the thing done was the same in either case, and to this he assented. When I expressed the views I had gained of the passage "buried with Christ in baptism," he referred that entirely

to spiritual baptism, and as to considering it emblematical of the death and resurrection of Christ, he objected that there was no similarity between the emblem and the act emblemized, and also that the grave being an emblem of loathsomeness and corruption, and water of purity, there was no appositeness in these views, but on the contrary, they were absurd. Many other things were said on the argumentative part of the subject, but did not dwell particularly upon my mind.

Some observations he made respecting the effect which a change of communion would have upon me—that Baptist sentiments induced narrow, contracted feelings, and that should I change, the result would probably be that I should be more bigoted than others, such always being the case where a profession had been made. He thought it would “injure my Christian character.” He told me of one of his church who, a short time previous, had been to see him on this subject, whom he described to be a “poor ignorant creature,” who knew no reason for a change only that she thought the “Baptists the rightest way.” He also said that whatever might be my

opinion with respect to the ordinance in question, the mistake in relation to that could not bear any comparison as a sin to that of breaking fellowship with a church with which I agreed on the doctrines essential to salvation. On referring to my previous opinions on this subject as having been what had aroused my mind and given power to conscience, he said that he wished for his sake, as well as my own, I had told him of this before.

I left him with a heavy heart; this last remark occasioned me painful feelings, for I felt that justice required that I should have been free and open on this subject. But then I considered it some palliation that in treating this matter in the manner I had done, I had only acted up to the spirit of the instruction which I had often heard from my pastor's lips. For as he had often spoken of the mode of baptism as non-essential, of little consequence, I felt that it would be weakness in me to be troubled about it; and now I was experiencing the natural result of such instruction.

However, the thought of causing Dr. ——— any unpleasant feelings by my course, brought to

my mind great sorrow, and indisposed me for pursuing the subject farther.

After my return home I besought the Lord with many tears, to prevent any evil consequences to result from my trials. I attempted to ask of God that this subject might be removed from my mind, but I could only say, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me," feebly adding, "not my will but Thine be done." I had applied to my pastor feeling the *oneness* of the cause of Christ, and with no desire but to be guided in the way of truth ; but now I felt the chilling conviction that in yielding to the voice which was continually whispering "this is the way, walk ye in it," I should be considered as attaching myself to a party.

The anguish this occasioned me led me to murmur that I had ever been constrained to enter the narrow way.

While reviewing Dr. ——'s reasoning against immersion as necessary to obedience, and my own views, derived as I thought from the scripture in answer to prayer, I said, Can I not then trust God ? has the Bible deceived me ? My mind was in great commotion ; it seemed as if what I heard from my pastor, and the Bible instructions,

were in direct opposition. My confidence in the word of God was so weak, and I so distrusted my ability to distinguish what were the teachings of God in my own soul, that I at once determined that I would take no farther step in this thing without first obtaining the advice, or at least, the approbation of some experienced and candid Christian of my own denomination.

My reflections were not suspended by this determination, when I considered what importance my pastor attached to learning in the investigation of this subject. I could not but think it inconsistent with the goodness of God, if so large a portion of his creatures, as is comprised in the unlearned class, were left to rely for guidance on the shifting, fallible opinions of men, and thus be obliged to go through life perplexed and distressed, not knowing whether or not they are obeying God—and this when to be found in the path of duty is the only evidence of being in the way of salvation. Is this, I thought, the wisdom and goodness of God? Can He, who came to preach to the poor and ignorant, have left His record so imperfect that in respect to the first commanded duty following the reception of

the gospel, none can know His will but the learned? With respect to the injury to my Christian character, by becoming bigoted, while I should greatly dread any such result; I thought of the oft expressed sentiment of Dr. ——— “It is always safe to do right.” I saw the necessity of being well assured of the simplicity of my motives. I sought to bring myself before God into the position in respect to His word, which I should occupy at the judgment day, when with the light of eternity streaming down upon the truth, any other motive than to find the counterpart of His revealed will in my practice would have no weight.

Respecting the objection to the emblematic signification of immersion, I remembered that though the grave was naturally considered a place of corruption and gloom—it was often said that in a spiritual sense, Jesus having “lain there” had sanctified it to believers, and that it was one of the excellences of the Christian faith, that to them it had become the portal into bliss ———. Dr. ——— compared the different *modes* of baptism, in respect to importance, to the difference in the color of a bonnet, and said

it was of just as much consequence, as whether I wore a yellow bonnet or a green one. To me it seemed to involve a principle, as whether I could trust the word of God—whether the Bible was a perfect rule.

My conflicts as to the position of faith and reason troubled me much, for I was sometimes ready to follow the intuitions of my own mind and become a Baptist, and then on the contrary resolutely determine that I would never be one. I tried to discover what it was that should occasion such fluctuations with the same facts on which to exercise my mind. I fell upon this remark as an “immutable law in theology,” that “we must first believe without examination, but must afterward endeavor to understand what we believe.” I concluded from this that the advantage of learning was not so much to secure from error in religious belief, as to enable one the better to state and defend his opinions.

June 16th, I received a kind note from my pastor, mentioning his intention of preaching on the subject of baptism soon, and suggesting my deferring action until I had heard his discourse.

I often felt the need of sympathy in my per-

plexity, but as I wished to avoid all undue influence in deciding the question, I had hitherto avoided seeking it in the conversation or writings of Baptists. At this time accident threw in my way the Life of Dr. D——, containing several of his sermons on baptism. I now read them freely, and was somewhat comforted in doing so, finding in them such harmony with my present views.

July 2d, Dr. —— preached on baptism. I was detained from church, but on the following Tuesday I received a note from him requesting me to come to his house in the afternoon. I complied with his wish, and heard read the arguments of his sermon, but could not feel affected by them, I had heard them all before and could not consider them unanswerable—they did not touch the point upon which my mind was laboring. On concluding the reading he said, that he had gone over the argument, and saw that it made no impression, and yet I had not had a word to say against it—that my mind was in a weak, sickly state.

I replied that, as the other side seemed as consistent with *reason*, I should, acting only from

that, be exposed continually to change, I wanted to *feel* established, but now I did not. To this he said: "When you get the tight rope of close communion around you, you can get no farther, you will be fast then," and added, that he had nothing further to say upon the subject.

This last consideration was quite a relief to me, for I felt that now I could act independently, I could pursue my own course, subject to no other influence than that from above.

I still, however, held the purpose of communicating my perplexities to one of my own denomination, for I could not get away from the idea that there must be some common ground of unity between those differing on this point.

The following day I visited a Congregational friend in whom I felt the greater confidence because I considered him uncommonly free from sectarian intolerance, and I knew that he was educated a Baptist, and had studied much the scriptures. I gave a free expression to my difficulties, and declared my conviction that the passage so often referred to, in the 6th chapter of Romans had its significance from the fact that baptism was an immersion. He took up the

chapter and gave an explanation of the design of the Apostle in the argument, and said that it had no reference to the external act, for that was carnal, whereas the Apostle was speaking wholly of spiritual things—the outward act was not here the baptism—but the baptism here spoken of was consecration to God. He advised me to give up thinking upon the subject, recover my former happy state of mind by opening my heart to Christ, and then if I was required to be a Baptist, be one, and not set up a will of my own; but he added, “I do not believe you will.” I said that as to giving up thinking upon the subject, that was an entire impossibility, for something must occupy my mind. He then gave me as a subject for reflection, Christ dwelling in the hearts of believers by His Spirit, and told me to search the scriptures for evidence of this truth.

I left him determining that as his advice did no violence to conscience, as it gave no countenance to any rebellion of my will, I would try to follow it.

But I found it to be all a work of constraint, for though the scripture truth to which he directed

my attention was plainly declared, I could derive no comfort from it only as I discovered the evidence of it in my own heart, and this evidence I thought was an obedient life, and my pastor's words occurred to me, "there is no obedience but practical obedience."

My thoughts would return to the old channel ; I could not separate the *feeling* of obedience from the *act* ; they must go together. To come to Christ and cast myself on Him would restore happiness, but I did not want to act upon the selfish principle of seeking chiefly my own happiness, I wished to act in accordance with *Truth*, to do right. I could not, therefore, be *sincere* in coming to Him in any other way than in the way of true obedience. When I thought of the justice and holiness of God—of the strictness of His law—I was sure that if I was to act under exact legal influence I should fear to offer any other than literal obedience. To do so would be as if an Israelite should bring for his offering to the Lord a torn lamb, or pigeons, when he was able to bring the required lamb.

Ought I not to come up as promptly to the gospel requirements from love to Christ who had

redeemed me from the penalty of the law? To do otherwise seemed to be to "sin because grace abounds." But then I was so distrustful of my motives, that when I took this latter view of the subject, I feared that I was entertaining a legal spirit, but when, as was sometimes the case, I felt great pleasure in anticipating submission to the rite, I feared I was actuated by the selfish desire of promoting my own happiness. I had no confidence in my own judgment as to what were the *intentions* of Christ in His ordinances any farther than they were expressed.

I had often considered the illustration of active faith in the case of Abraham, he being held up in the New Testament as an example of faith. When commanded to offer his son, he was only required to go so far in the duty as to exhibit evidence of his obedient spirit; but I could derive no inference from this, which would allow me to fail in fulfilling the act pressing upon my conscience, for Abraham only desisted from consummating the sacrifice at the express command of God.

The effect of the visit and conversation before mentioned was less favorable than I anticipated, for instead of clearing the path of duty, it only mystified the word of God, by

presenting religion as so entirely an interior thing, that it lessened my regard for any outward expression of it. By making light of variations in the *mode* of baptism, I felt any performance of it to be less important; for if a command might be varied according to pleasure, it might be dispensed with at pleasure; and if that might be done with one, it might with all, as all were supported by the same authority.

But I continued to reason—as religion has its seat in the heart, these outward observances are necessary only because of the weakness of faith—if therefore I could rise above my present scruples, I should attain a much greater elevation of piety. Then the thought would force itself upon me. Why did Christ appoint ordinances? He surely intended the outward act when He commanded the Apostles to baptize, as that was all the baptism which they could administer, and He knew best what His followers needed, and however others might rise to the lofty heights of Christian perfection without the intervention of external helps, I must be contented to go up by the appointed steps. “God that hath appointed the end, hath also established

the means and order by which men shall attain the ultimate end." I concluded that to keep to the strict observance of the letter of the command was the safest way, and the one most adapted to form a symmetrical Christian character, and I could now only regret having put any barrier in the way of doing so. Since I had raised such, I felt that nothing but error could require me to break through it; and as I believed that the church of which I was a member acted according to the light they had received and were sincere, it might be duty to retain my place with them, rather than displease those who truly loved the Saviour, though I might be less happy.

Then the question arose: Does sincerity excuse them from the charge of error when they have the means of knowing the truth? To be sincerely wrong is not admitted right, in the case of the impenitent. Why then should it be in the case of the Christian?

I found myself now wishing others to embrace what was clearly the right way. I thought too of the heathen nations, that as Christians were impressing their character upon them, it was important that their own should be formed after

the Bible model. Having arrived at this point, consistency seemed to require that I should place myself on the right side, that what influence I had should be upon the side of truth. But then what shall these my friends do? "What is that to thee, follow thou Me."

I was under obligation to walk according to the light I had received. If I could be judged in the mass, and enter heaven in the mass, it would do to so identify myself with the church as to lose my individual responsibility. This I could not do, I must stand for myself, and I could never cast off the responsibility laid upon me by the light I had already received.

As the communion season in August approached I very nearly dismissed the subject which had so much engrossed my thoughts, and began to hope for peace, but at the table of the Lord that subject came before my mind so clear and so penetrating, accompanied with such self-reproach that I could scarcely restrain my feelings until I reached home, when I gave up to the anguish of my soul.

The preaching which I heard now contained something that ever condemned my present

position, and I found that remaining where I was, I could have no comfort from the means of grace, and in addition to this was the fear that my presence here might hinder the blessing of God coming upon this people—as a Jonah in the vessel, or an Achan in the camp.

Still the thought of leaving the place where I had so long heard the gospel, and which was connected with all my associations of a religious character, was very distressing to me.

I had not sought to strengthen myself by reading the writings of Baptists, but about this time I obtained several tracts which I read with great interest, they accorded with the scriptures, but yet had no power to lead me to act.

On the last Sabbath in September my pastor preached on Infant Baptism ; the arguments he used in favor of the practice were the same as those of Jerome which I had read, and respecting which I had thought that more dependence was placed upon a course of inference than upon scripture. I wished, however, to know what evidence Apostolical traditions presented to favor the rite, and, therefore, obtained Wall's History of Infant Baptism, which my pastor had

declared to be very complete upon this subject. I studied it with attention and candor, and was indeed perplexed to understand how such a practice should have so early become prevalent in the church.

But I saw in that work how it was quite possible its extension might have been aided; for from the earliest quotations from the Fathers which were adduced as favoring infant baptism, I thought that if they had felt on their conversion as I did, nothing would have been more natural than to have spoken of converts as little children and infants, for I often found myself involuntarily using such language in application to myself.

About this time I attended the examination of Rev. Mr. ———, of the ——— church. Several questions were proposed to him in relation to the ordinances. After speaking of infant baptism and remarking that he had bestowed considerable attention upon that subject, on account of having lived when young in the family of a Baptist, he said that with respect to the precise relation in which these children stood to the church, he was not fully decided—he had not

made up his mind. That he had sometimes thought that the children of the church ought to be brought, as the children of the Jews were, at the age of twelve years, to the ordinances. What ordinances he intended he did not specify, but as they had already in his view been baptized, and probably attended upon the common institutions of religion, the preaching of the word, I supposed that he intended the Lord's Supper.

I could not but be surprised that having been for several years a minister of the gospel he should remain unsettled on a point of such practical importance, since God has promised to supply any lack of wisdom. I did not wonder that admitting infants to be proper subjects for the one ordinance, he should doubt whether consistency did not require that they should be admitted to the other.

Here I saw the insufficiency of human learning to establish in the truth. I was by this encouraged in the use of my own judgment in relation to this subject, as I was also by the following passage from Wall in adducing reasons why the common people are less liable to error than the learned: "Vulgar people having no

assistance from learning and philosophy, have nothing but common sense to trust to—so they generally keep close to that; they seldom allow themselves to maintain any opinion very remote from it.” In respect to other gospel duties, I saw that they were predicated upon individual responsibility, so that to suppose the individual to have no direct responsibility in baptism seemed to introduce discord into the harmony of truth.

I then saw and felt that I might be satisfied with what I had done, if I had the approbation of God—man’s reason was not the standard to which to appeal—my dissatisfaction arose, not from my having acted contrary to *reason*, but because I had not looked higher and yielded to the authority of the word of God. It was evident that my faith went no farther for its basis *in that act* than the testimony of man saying “it is not essential;” thus it stood in the wisdom of man, not in the power of God, for the image in mind when reading in God’s word the account of the baptism of Jesus and that of the Ethiopian was ever that of an immersion, and no effort or argument could obliterate it.

At this point I heard several sermons which were influential in urging me forward, particularly one from my pastor, on the address of Christ to the church in Ephesus, reproving them for having left their first love, and exhorting them to do their first works. I knew that if I were again to possess the temper in which I first entered the Christian life, I should be at no loss what work to do. I had now only to overcome the obstacles which my natural feelings placed in the way of duty. To acknowledge myself in the wrong was ever a difficult duty to me, as it was also to perform an act which to many seemed useless and vain, and on the result of which I could not calculate. All my fastidiousness too was arrayed against the necessary accompaniments of the rite.

These hindrances were only such as pertain to the worldly unbelieving spirit. To be free from their power I must regain the spirit of a little child—go back to my alphabet and then I might hope to rise in the school of Christ and “go on unto perfection.”

So little *impulse* had I yet gained towards action, that after having called upon the pastor

of the Baptist Church in relation to my change—he having said nothing to influence me, or take from me any part of the responsibility of decision—I had another season of hesitation, growing out of the absence in my soul of such impulse.

I began to think that I ought to wait for more light in my soul—and take no such important step in the dark.

On Sabbath evening, Nov. 12th, I heard a sermon on the sacrifice of Abraham. The introductory remarks entirely accorded with the current of my reflections for sometime past. The preacher spoke of the influence which dependence upon human reason has in hindering us from implicit obedience. He said that Christians were required to “bow to naked authority even in the dark.” The truths he uttered were forcibly applied to my own case, and helped to clear my way, and to show me that the *principles* which I had heard enforced, required the action which I had been contemplating.

The first thought in my mind on awaking the next morning was a verse of scripture, which glanced upon me uncalled; it was this: “Say

unto the children of Israel that they go forward." I did not dwell upon or particularly notice it, but the next morning it occurred to me in the same manner, and also frequently in the course of the day, until I was led to examine on what occasion and under what circumstances it was uttered. I found it was addressed to Moses after his decision to "stand still and see the salvation of God." There were the Israelites, the enemy behind, the impassable barriers on the right and left, and the sea in front. I then remembered a remark I had made to a friend when I found myself in difficulty, after uniting with the —— church. I said to her, I am in the same condition as were the children of Israel at the Red Sea, mountains on each side, the sea before, and I cannot go back. Now came to my mind this position of that people, when they at the command of God, went down into the midst of the sea, and then followed this scripture, "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." They were to follow their God-appointed leader, Moses. We in like manner have for our leader the Lord Jesus Christ, and are commanded to follow Him; and He said: "Thus

it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." So clearly and delightfully was my way marked out. I heard the voice of the Master and soon obeyed the call, and "was buried with Christ in baptism." Expressing in this divinely appointed rite—what the word of God declares, and what long years of struggle with my own unbelief and sin had confirmed to me as true, that Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and must be received into the heart as our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. A whole Saviour. A complete salvation.

20

21

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